

WASHINGTON STATE TITLE
IV-E DEMONSTRATION
PROJECT

SEMI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: JULY -
DECEMBER 2016

*WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL AND
HEALTH SERVICES
CHILDREN'S
ADMINISTRATION*

Table of Contents

I)	Overview	2
II)	Demonstration, Activities and Accomplishments	3
	Child Protective Services - Family Assessment Response (CPS-FAR) Data	3
	Demonstration Activities	3
	Statewide Child Protective Services Intake Trends	7
III)	Fiscal.....	7
IV)	Evaluation Status	8
V)	Recommendations and Activities Planned for Next Reporting Period	8
VI)	Program Improvement Policies	9

Appendix 1: TriWest Evaluation Report

Appendix 2: CPS-FAR Targeted Case Review Results

Appendix 3: Physical Abuse Targeted Case Review Results

I. Overview

Washington State passed legislation in 2012 requiring differential response in the state's public child welfare administration. On January 1, 2014, Children's Administration (CA) began providing CPS-FAR, the differential response to a CPS investigation, in three locations: Aberdeen, Lynnwood, and two zip codes in Spokane. Since then CA has implemented CPS-FAR in an additional 36 offices across the state.

Status of CPS-FAR Implementation

As of December 31, 2016, CA has implemented CPS-FAR in the following 39 offices:

<p>Rural Central Washington</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ellensburg2. Sunnyside3. Moses Lake4. Toppenish5. Goldendale <p>Northwest Washington</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Mount Vernon7. Oak Harbor <p>Tacoma</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. Pierce East9. Pierce West10. Lakewood <p>Rural Eastern Washington</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">11. Colville12. Newport13. Republic <p>Western Washington</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">14. Lynnwood15. Sky Valley16. Smokey Point17. Bremerton18. Vancouver19. Stevenson20. Aberdeen21. Kelso22. Tumwater23. Centralia24. Shelton	<p>Washington Coast</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">25. Long Beach26. South Bend27. Forks28. Port Townsend29. Port Angeles <p>Seattle</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">30. Martin Luther King Jr.*31. King East*32. King West33. White Center <p>Eastern Washington</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">34. Spokane35. Lincoln County36. Walla Walla37. Richland38. Clarkston39. Colfax <p>*The Office of Indian Child Welfare (OICW) provides CPS-FAR to Native American families in these two locations.</p>
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Over the last six months CPS-FAR was launched in the following offices:

- July 25, 2016 Toppenish, Goldendale, Centralia, Shelton, Tumwater
- October 24, 2016 King West and White Center

Implementation will continue in the remaining offices under the following schedule:

- January 30, 2017 Wenatchee, Omak, Everett and Bellingham
- April 24, 2017 Yakima
- May 15, 2017 King Southeast and King Southwest

Readiness for offices launching next year are well underway. This work involves an office readiness assessment, identifying CPS-FAR staff, hiring of staff (as needed), communication with local community partners and stakeholders, deliberate efforts to get caseloads reduced prior to launch, and training of CPS-FAR caseworkers.

CPS-FAR Intake Data

CA has tracked CPS intake data since January 2014. Because the intake screening tool was updated and implemented in October 2013, this action has allowed for review of intakes that would be screened-in to CPS-FAR if the pathway were available. This data is collected at the point the screening decision is made by the intake worker. Intake supervisors change 5 – 10% of intake worker screening decisions. Supervisors change intake screening decisions for a number of reasons, including: family history of child abuse and neglect, additional information from collateral contacts, and disagreement with the intake worker’s screening decision.

Data shows that cases are transferring from CPS-FAR to investigations 4.87% of the time. Cases transferring to investigations because of safety concerns are very close in number to the cases that transfer because the family declines participation in FAR. Dependency action was taken on almost 2% of the CPS-FAR families.

Statewide July – December 2016						
Month	Intakes Assigned to CPS-FAR	CPS-FAR cases Transferred to Investigations Due to Safety or Risk Concerns	Families who Declined to Participate in CPS-FAR (Transferred to Investigators)	Percent Transferred to Investigations Total	Dependencies Filed ¹	Percent Dependencies Filed <i>Dependencies filed are counted by hand</i>
July	928	28	21	5.3%	20	2.2%
August	1,084	32	31	5.8%	23	2.1%
September	1,320	35	30	4.9%	24	1.8%
October	1,442	36	36	5.0%	21	1.5%
November	1,361	34	30	4.7%	16	1.2%
December	1,186	23	17	3.4%	13	1.9%
Total	7,321	188	165	4.8%	127	1.8%

II. Demonstration, Activities, and Accomplishments

Training and Coaching

CPS-FAR training is developed and delivered via a partnership between CA and The Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence (Alliance) at the University of Washington School of Social Work. Caseworkers and supervisors are surveyed after each training and the training is modified based on the feedback received. Child safety is at the core of this training.

In August 2016 practice discussions involving CPS- FAR, CPS-Investigation supervisors and regional leadership staff were facilitated in each region of the state. This was a teamed effort between regional and headquarters staff. The practice discussions focused on several safety-related practice areas, with the intent of developing strategies to improve practice in these areas. While each session was a bit different, the supervisors and regional leadership identified many common issues/challenges that impact practice.

As a result of these practice discussions, training was recently modified to include skill building on having difficult conversations with caregivers. Staff practice engagement skills in addition to improving their skills and finding a degree of comfort having difficult conversations with “parents” on child safety topics such as safe sleep, supervision, and gathering information about other adults in the home. Parent Allies (parents formerly involved in the child welfare system) assist with these practice sessions and role play as the parents. After the exercise they provide feedback directly to the workers about their approach. This practice exercise has been very well received by staff.

Staff turnover continues to necessitate the scheduling of additional training sessions to train newly-hired staff in existing CPS-FAR offices. These sessions have also included CPS investigators to strengthen cross-training opportunities on CPS-FAR. One special session was conducted during this review period, specifically November 7- 10, 2016.

Changes to CPS-FAR Practice and Policy

CA’s existing chronicity screening indicator has been adjusted so that a third accepted intake in a twelve-month period will screen to investigation. In addition, a new intake involving a child with a dismissal of a dependency case within 12 months will screen to investigation. These two policy changes took effect July 1, 2016. A recent review of data suggests the changes had a minor impact on the percentage of cases screening to FAR versus investigations.

A policy change took effect on October 23, 2016 which directs intakes to CPS-Investigations when the allegation is related to parental neglect of child on child sexual abuse. Many of these intakes were previously going to CPS-FAR. These types of cases are included in county-wide County Special Assault Protocols across the state. These protocols written by the county prosecutor in consultation with CA, first responders, medical providers, service provides and advocates, define circumstances in which a coordinated response to child abuse allegations is necessary.

A small pilot of an engagement tool began October 1, 2016 in three CPS-FAR offices. The pilot is called “The Difference Game”. This is a tool developed by the University of Washington and used by staff in their Parent-Child Assistance Program (PCAP) with mothers whose substance abuse is negatively impacting the parenting and possibly the safety of their children. The Difference Game is a card-sorting tool which allows the client to

identify what would make the most difference in their life. The choices include a broad array of services and concrete needs with one “wild” card. The goal of the pilot is to strengthen engagement between worker and client with use of a client-driven tool. While some staff find the tool to be useful in their work with families, many staff find it awkward and/or unnecessary. The pilot is scheduled to end December 31, 2016.

Provision of Concrete Goods

CA contracted with agencies in each of the three regions to purchase, store, and distribute concrete goods to families and CA offices across the state. This has proven to be a successful endeavor. Staff appreciate having necessary items on hand or easily accessible to them and families are getting things that they need in a timely and efficient manner. Planning is underway to open this process up to all programs. Currently CPS-FAR workers are able to request necessary items for families, such as diapers, cribs, housekeeping supplies, lice kits, and beds that have been identified as needed to address safety or risk concerns. The contracted providers deliver the items to the local CA offices and/or directly to a family’s home. Many of the families involved in CPS-FAR have a variety of unmet basic needs impacting the parent’s ability to reduce risk of abuse and neglect to their children. The intent of these contracts is to reduce barriers to obtaining these goods for families and streamline the process for distribution.

Targeted Case Review

The fifth CPS-FAR Targeted Case Review occurred September 26-30, 2016. Twenty-two reviewers electronically reviewed a total of 359 cases or approximately two cases per worker. The reviewers included Area Administrators, HQ’s FAR and Regional leads, CPS-FAR supervisors, Regional Safety Administrators, Quality Practice Program Specialists, and a Central Case Review Team member. Six reviewers performed second reviews on approximately 40% of the cases, reviewed for quality assurance and consistency. The period under review was April 1, 2016 - September 12, 2016.

Practice Strengths

The practice areas below were identified as strengths with a review rating of 80% or higher.

1. Initial Face-to-Face (IFF) contact with all child victims
2. Comprehensive interviews and observations of children
3. Comprehensive parent/caregiver interviews
4. Comprehensiveness of FAR Family Assessment
5. Efforts to collaborate with mothers.

Areas Needing Improvement Related to Safety

The practice areas below are identified as areas needing improvement with a review rating lower than 80%.

1. Assessment of other adults
2. Collateral contacts
3. Structured Decision Making tool completed accurately
4. Domestic Violence
5. Safe Sleep and the Period of Purple Crying

The areas needing practice improvement in CPS-FAR are very similar to areas needing improvement in CPS- Investigations. Regions were asked to identify one or two areas needing improvement and develop a plan to improve performance in those areas.

In addition to this case review a separate targeted case review was conducted. The case sample consisted of intakes alleging physical abuse of children ages four - five years old. One hundred cases were reviewed; half of the cases were assigned to FAR and the other half to Investigations, with a 72-hour response time. Many of the Investigative cases reviewed were intakes that were FAR eligible and would have gone to FAR had the pathway been available.

The purpose of the review was to examine the practice in both FAR and Investigations on similar reported cases of physical abuse of four - five year olds, evaluate adherence to policy and procedures related to child physical abuse and help inform decision making around screening decision changes for CPS pathway. CPS – FAR cases rated higher than CPS-Investigations but there remains work to be done to improve child safety in both pathways. The results of the review do not support a pathway change for intakes involving physical abuse allegations involving 4 and 5-year-old children.

Case review results can be found in appendix B.

Additional Activities for this Reporting Period

- Weekly CPS-FAR Project Team meetings to discuss implementation, policy and practice, successes, and challenges as well as planning for future CPS-FAR related activities.
- Monthly meetings between the CPS-FAR Project Team and the regional CPS-FAR Leads. The leads share updates from their regions and local offices and bring issues to the attention of the CPS-FAR Project Team.
- Ongoing site visits to offices. The CPS-FAR Project Team conducts site visits to observe CPS-FAR operations at the local level, assess unmet training needs, and provide case consultation, with the goal of supporting caseworkers and striving for fidelity to the CPS-FAR model.
- Participation in monthly statewide CPS and Intake program manager meetings. The CPS-FAR Project Team also participates in monthly intake consultation calls with intake supervisors from across the state. The intake consultation calls assist in developing statewide consistency in screening intakes for CPS investigation and the CPS-FAR pathways.
- Bi-monthly meetings with the CPS-FAR Steering Committee, comprised of the CA Assistant Secretary, division directors including Program and Policy, Finance and Performance Evaluation, the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, and Casey Family Programs. The committee receives updates on implementation, CPS-FAR data, and serves as a decision-making body as needed.
- Monthly meetings with TriWest Group, the contracted evaluator of CPS-FAR. The meetings cover activities and work accomplished over the previous month, allow opportunities for information sharing and more recently the review of preliminary data.
- Regional and headquarters staff attended and presented at the National Differential Response Conference in November 2016.

III. Fiscal

Family Assessment Response Expenditures Services, Concrete Goods, Staffing	
July 2016 – December 2016	\$6,256,358

Addressing Challenges to Implementation

Intake

The data below shows the percentage of intakes screened to both CPS-FAR and CPS-Investigation, as well as regional variations. These numbers reflect CPS intakes for offices that have the CPS-FAR pathway available.

Statewide CPS Intake Screening Decisions January – December 2016			
Location	Total Number of CPS Intakes	Percent of CPS-FAR Intakes	Percent of Intakes Investigated
Region 1	8,282	48%	52%
Region 2	7,604	53%	47%
Region 3	12,524	58%	42%
Statewide	28,410	53.5%	46.5%

Efforts to achieve consistency in screening and consensus in decision-making continue. These efforts include monthly intake consensus-building phone calls and monthly intake and CPS program leads meetings. Both of these allow for discussion about the screening tool, screening decisions, policy and practice.

CPS-FAR Agreement

State law requires CPS-FAR families to sign a participation agreement. If the family does not want to sign the agreement, the case is transferred to CPS-Investigation. In discussions with CPS-FAR caseworkers about the agreement, the CPS-FAR Project Team learned that many of the families who chose not to participate in CPS-FAR did not want to sign the agreement; some families indicated that signing the agreement meant they felt they were admitting to abusing or neglecting their child and/or agreeing to participate in services. While the agreement only asks parents to sign in order to acknowledge agreement to participate in CPS-FAR, the parent's perception of the agreement appears to be a barrier to signing.

CA continues to have concerns about the requirement of a signature and that cases may be transferred to an investigation when CPS-FAR is more appropriate for the family and the alleged incident. After some research with states that have differential response, it appears that no other state requires a parent to sign a written agreement in order to participate in the alternate intervention. TriWest Group, our contracted evaluator of FAR, has found that Native American families are more likely to decline FAR, presumably because of the agreement. Children's Administration has submitted request legislation for the 2017 session seeking to have the agreement removed from statute.

Length of Time for CPS-FAR Intervention

CPS-FAR legislation allows for a CPS-FAR case to be open for 45 days for assessment with an extension up to 90 days for service provision with parental consent. CPS-FAR staff have consistently provided feedback that more time is needed for both assessment and service provision. Children's Administration has submitted request legislation for the 2017 session seeking to increase the amount of time a CPS-FAR case can remain open for services.

Additional Legislative Request

Children's Administration is currently required to conduct a CPS investigation for any criminal offense; no matter how minor the offense is, even if the minor criminal offense has no bearing whatsoever on child safety. This detracts from the intent of the Family Assessment Response (FAR). A minor amendment to RCW 26.44.030 would allow for those families with a minor criminal offense in their background to be able to go through the FAR track.

IV. Evaluation Status and Findings

TriWest Group has provided updated information on the status of the evaluation as well as findings for this report. This information can be found in appendix A.

V. Recommendations and Activities Planned for Next Reporting Period

- Assess the readiness of the remaining offices and work with the CPS-FAR regional leads to identify and address barriers that could impact implementation.
- Launch the remaining seven offices by May 15, 2017. This will include holding CPS-FAR preview sessions for supervisors and area administrators, and training of CPS-FAR caseworkers.
- Train new CPS-FAR caseworkers hired into existing CPS-FAR offices as well as staff needing to be cross-trained.
- Assess the pilot of "The Difference Game" and determine next steps.
- Conduct a CPS-FAR case review in March 2017. Assess practice strengths and areas needing improvement.
- Continue building community resources and relationships.
- Continue site visits to CPS-FAR offices. These visits include meeting with CPS-FAR workers, supervisors and area administrators and provide opportunities to answer questions and provide practice direction.

- Continue to gather feedback from caseworkers through site visits and surveys about the program's successes and challenges and how to improve training, policy, and support from the state and regional level.
- Continue to evaluate the intakes assigned to CPS-FAR and identify any trends for CPS-FAR intakes that transfer to investigations or result in a dependency. Assess regional variation in screening rates to CPS-FAR and investigations.
- Organize key informant interviews for TriWest group. These will be completed in Toppenish, Goldendale, Centralia, Tumwater and Shelton.
- Continue to work with TriWest Group to inform their evaluation.

VI. Program Improvement Policies

CA committed to implementing two child welfare program improvement policies as outlined in the terms and conditions of the IV-E waiver.

1. Procedures to Assist Youth in Foster Care to Reconnect with Biological Family Members: Inclusion in the State's Title IV-E plan of a description of the State's procedures for ensuring that foster youth, ages 16, and older are engaged in discussions regarding their desire to reconnect with biological family members, including during the development of transition plans required by the case plan and case review requirements of Section 475(1)(D) and 5(H) of the Social Security Act.
 - Explore whether the youth wishes to reconnect with his or her biological family, including parents, grandparents, and siblings, and if so, what skills and strategies the youth will need to successfully and safely reconnect with those family members;
 - Provide appropriate guidance and services to assist youth who affirm a desire to reconnect with biological family members to safely and successfully achieve this goal; and
 - When appropriate, make efforts to include biological family members in the reconnection effort.

Caseworkers encounter situations when youth express his or her desire to be with their bio-family and there are times that the caseworker will initiate the "re-establishing relationships with biological family members" conversation. The conversations include follow-up discussions on safety, well-being and permanency. The information may be incorporated in the case plan or the work may be embedded in practice.

CA will be implementing specific policy that will identify adolescent policies by age and function with an anticipated effective date of April 2017. The policy will identify when and how we engage youth in practice and case planning. The policy will align with current policies and procedures that support the practice of maintaining and re-establishing family connections such as:

- Monthly Health and Safety Visits with Children Policy Caseworkers and youth visits occur monthly. During these visits information is gathered on all aspects of the youth's life. Discussing parental relations is a very common conversation between the caseworker and youth. The caseworkers support the youth and give tools and ideas on how to move forward on re-establishing relationships needs with their biological families.
- Family Team Decision Making Meetings Policy Prior to "returning home", the youth's team conducts a meeting to discuss a transition and support plan for the youth and family. The plan focuses on ensuring the safety of the youth during transition and when living at home. Family and youth relatives and supports are invited and expected to offer how they can support and help the family and youth if the need arises.
- Independent Living Program (IL). Youth who are engaged in an IL Program are connected to an IL worker who will assist the youth in bridging family connections by helping the youth identify potential positive connections and barriers to these connections. The IL worker will also be available to help facilitate interactions with family members. The IL worker is responsible for setting appropriate boundaries that meet the youth's needs for independence and connection to family.

Youth in the IL Program also learn about "relational permanency" through the Foster Club's Permanency Pact. Skills are taught on how to identify supports they may want or need to help them transition to adulthood. IL workers assist the youth in developing a list of people who may be willing to help with identified supports. The list may include current relationships or previous relationships such as family members. The IL provider talks to the youth about healthy relationships and establishing boundaries.

- CA Responsibilities to Dependent Youth 12 and older policy and Youth Petition for Reinstatement of Parental Rights policy. Many youths have attorneys by the age of 16. Youth are able to meet with their attorneys to discuss case plans. If the youth expresses a desire to reconnect with family, the attorney will represent the child's position in court.
- Shared Planning Meetings policy. Beginning at 14, youth are active participants in their case planning. The youth attends shared planning meetings and court hearings. The youth may also invite two individuals to the meeting. The youth may express his/her ideas and what he/she would like to see happen in his/her life. Discussion of permanency is a dominant topic in the meetings. Linking bio-family's reconnections, safety, wellbeing and permanency, the participants can create a supported case plan for the youth.

In July 2016, the Shared Planning Meetings policy was updated for youth 16 and above, to discuss the child's connections with siblings and other relatives including discussion of skills and strategies to safely reconnect with any identified family members and guidance and services to assist with reconnecting.

- Children Missing From Care policy Some youth who are "Missing from Care" are connecting with bio-families. Circumstances that led to the youth's placement in out-of-home care may not be relevant at an older age. The family may have alleviated risks and safety concerns or there may be

additional protective factors present. Caseworkers are reassessing safety risks and are using bio-families for placement options for the youth. Support services can be provided to the family.

2. Increased Age Limit for Title IV-E Programs to 21

Washington State's Extended Foster Care (EFC) Program is a result of the state's efforts to further implement the Federal Fostering Connections for Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. It provides an opportunity for youth who are in foster care on their 18th birthday to continue to receive services until they turn 21.

Beginning in 2011, Washington State proposed legislation that defined the program criteria for qualifying youth aging out of the foster care system to participate in the EFC program and receive the benefits and case management assistance the program offers.

In 2013, Washington state legislation, facilitated the delivery of extended foster care services for any youth who is dependent in foster care at the age of eighteen years and who, at the time of his or her eighteenth birthday is in school, working full or part-time, or seeking to enter school. The final program eligibility criterion was enacted in March 2015. Under this criterion, which became effective July 1, 2016, youth qualify for the program regardless of their ability to engage in the previously established criteria if the youth has a documented medical condition.

Washington state law establishes EFC throughout the state. Washington state EFC policy stipulates that youth can participate from the day they become 18 upon exiting the foster care system; or voluntarily enter the EFC program prior to becoming 19 years old through a Voluntary Placement Agreement if they exit foster care when they become 18 years old. Children's Administration is committed to providing these former youths the resources, case management, and guidance for a successful transition to adulthood.